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ABSTRACT

The First Regional Early Childhood Forum was convened by the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL) to identify, develop, and promote linkages in the community that foster the healthy development of young children and their families. Participants were divided into collaborative work groups first according to affiliation, then across agencies and states, and finally by state. In this record of proceedings, introductory information is followed by a summary of Michael Kirst's keynote address, "The Different Worlds of Preschools, Elementary Schools, and Children's Service Agencies." Kirst identifies barriers to collaboration and ways of overcoming them, and offers recommendations on implementing school-linked services. Next, the first work group report focuses on existing collaborations and potentially beneficial linkages. A summary of a panel discussion of collaboration is followed by Susan Walter's presentation, "One Family's Perspective: Seeing Children as Their Families See Them." Walter asserts that services for families with handicapped children must be accessible, both in terms of geography and acceptance of the families' cultures. Programs must also be comprehensive and coordinated, focused on families, and community-based. The next work group report considers collaboration across agencies and states, describing a new early childhood system, linkage strategies, and possible actions. Next, Illinois Lieutenant Governor Bob Kustra describes Project SUCCESS as a model for linking social services. The final work group report deals with agency and organizational policies that affect collaboration within a state. Finally, the forum report presents Michael Kirst's "Reflections on the NCREL Early Childhood Forum," a summary of upcoming forums and activities of NCREL, a list of members of NCREL's advisory council on early childhood and family education, and a list of participants in the forum. (AC)

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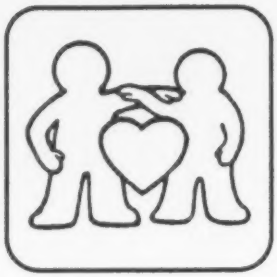

Interagency Collaboration in the Heartland: Challenges and Opportunities

PROCEEDINGS OF THE NCREL EARLY CHILDHOOD CONNECTION

First Regional Early Childhood Forum
October 14-15, 1991
North Central Regional Educational Laboratory

PS 020463

Written by:
Lenaya Raack
Linda G. Kunesh
Deborah Shulman

With contributions from:
Michael Kirst
Susan Walter
Paula Wolff

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The goals of this Forum and the challenges it provided present an opportunity for those of us in the Early Childhood Community to come together, share information and experiences, and work together to create a better delivery system of services for our region's young children and their families.

We believe interagency collaboration is the key to providing comprehensive, integrated, family-focused, and community-based services for young children, birth through age eight. Establishing working relationships, valuing parent involvement, and creating successful linkages from early childhood to elementary school are just some of the crucial issues surrounding this topic. As educators, parents, policymakers, service providers, and community and business leaders, we have a responsibility to these children and their families, and we must begin to orchestrate change *now*.

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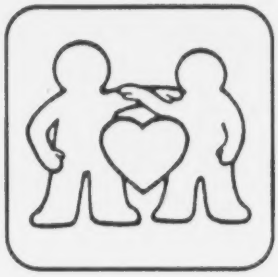

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Michael W. Kirst
Lt. Governor Robert Kustra

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Forum Agenda

Monday, October 14, 1991

1:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.	**Opening Remarks**	**Regency DEF**
	Welcome ..... *Linda G. Kunesh*, Director, Early Childhood and Family Education, North Central Regional Educational Laboratory	
	Welcome ..... *Vernon LaPlante*, Project Specialist, American Indian Intitiative, Midwest Regional Center for Drug-Free Schools and Communities	
	Greetings from the Illinois State Board of Education ..... *Gail Lieberman*, Assistant Superintendent, Department of Special Education, Illinois State Board of Education	
	Introduction ..... *Deanna Durrett*, Director, Regional Policy Information Center, North Central Regional Educational Laboratory	
1:30 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.	**Keynote Address** *Michael W. Kirst*, Director, Policy Analysis for California Education, Stanford University, *"The Different Worlds of Preschool, Elementary Schools, and Children's Service Agencies - Breaking Down Barriers and Creating Collaboration"*	
2:30 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.	**Informal Networking and Break**	**Regency Foyer**
3:00 p.m. - 4:15 p.m.	**Collaborative Work Groups: Affiliation** *Dennis Sykes*, Program Manager, Center for Special Needs Populations, Great Lakes Area Regional Resource Center, Ohio State University	
4:15 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.	**Affiliation Groups Report Out**	
6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.	**Networking Reception**	**Regency BC**

Forum Agenda

Tuesday, October 15, 1991

7:45 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.	**Continental Breakfast**	**Regency DEF**
	Advocating Collaboration: One State's Perspective *Lois Engstrom*, Supervisor, Early Childhood and Adult and Family Education, Minnesota Department of Education	
8:45 a.m. - 8:50 a.m.	**Challenge** *Linda G. Kunesh*, Director, Early Childhood and Family Education, North Central Regional Educational Laboratory	
8:50 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.	**Panel Discussion - Effective Collaborations: Improving Services for Young Children and Families**	
	Introduction ..... *Debby D. Shulman*, Program Assistant, Early Childhood and Family Education, North Central Regional Educational Laboratory	
	Moderator .....*Paula Wolff*, CEO, Cluster Initiative, Chicago, Illinois	
	Panel Members .....*Ben Perez*, Asst. Superintendent, Lansing Public Schools, Lansing, Michigan	
	Nancy Peterson, Professor of Education, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas	
	Saundra Van, Head Start Director, Community and Economic Development Association of Cook County, Chicago, Illinois	
	Paul Vivian, Director of Family Resource Centers, Department of Human Services, State of Connecticut	
	Susan Walter, Parent, Illinois Interagency Council on Early Intervention, Highland, Illinois	
10:30 a.m. - 10:45 a.m.	**Break**	**Regency Foyer**

10:45 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.	**Collaborative Work Groups: Interdisciplinary/Interstate**	
	Introduction ..... *Judy Carter*, Executive Director, Family Resource Coalition, Chicago, Illinois	
12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.	**Luncheon**	**Essex Room**
	Welcome ..... *Jeri Nowakowski*, Executive Director, North Central Regional Educational Laboratory	
	Presentation ..... *The Honorable Robert Kustra*, Lieutenant Governor, State of Illinois	
1:10 p.m. - 2:15 p.m.	**Collaborative Work Groups: State**	**Regency DEF**
	Introduction .....*George Jesien*, Program Director, Waisman Center, University of Wisconsin - Madison, and President of the Division for Early Childhood, Council for Exceptional Children	
2:15 p.m. - 2:45 p.m.	**Forum Synthesis**	*Michael Kirst*, Director, Policy Analysis for California Education, Stanford University
	Closing Remarks ..... *Linda G. Kunesh*, Director, Early Childhood and Family Education, North Central Regional Educational Laboratory	
2:45 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.	**Evaluation**	
3:00 p.m.	**Adjournment**	

Introduction

The First Regional Early Childhood Forum, ***The NCREL Early Childhood Connection*** was not, by any means, a typical conference. Keynote speaker Michael Kirst, Stanford University, characterized the group as "fairly rare." At a time when conferences are becoming increasingly specialized in their subject matter and participant make-up, NCREL succeeded in bringing together 150 people from extremely diverse professional backgrounds who share a passionate commitment to children and families and a strong conviction that collaboration is the key to better meet the needs of young children and their families.

We encouraged these individuals to talk, share ideas, and form new partnerships. Some were colleagues who rarely had an opportunity to talk with one another, and yet others had to deal with agency policies and procedures that actually put them at odds with each other. Participants were challenged to look within themselves and to each other and to take stock of what was at stake. Thousands of youngsters, we reminded them, were counting on *each one of us* to set aside our differences, our particular areas of "turf," and sometimes our own egos, so that children and families can more easily access the services they need. Our purpose was to connect the participants with others from their own disciplines and link them with new partners, not only within their state, but across states—to share experiences, to learn from one another, to share their hopes and dreams, and to make concrete commitments.

We convened the Forum to identify, develop, and promote linkages in the community that foster the healthy development of young children, birth through age eight, and their families. Our goals were:

- To strengthen consensus that services for young children and families must be integrated, comprehensive, family-focused, and responsive to a continuum of needs within the community
- To provide a forum for relationship-building among various public and private organizations, agencies, service providers, and consumers interested in integrated services for young children and families
- To highlight efforts that bring together these various entities on behalf of young children and families
- To assist in developing public and private policies that are supportive of young children and families

We admitted that collaboration is not easy. It takes time, compromise, and often forces one to look beyond personal ideas and biases. The results, however, are immensely gratifying.

This Forum arose out of a collaborative effort, beginning with the Great Lakes Early Intervention Network, an informal regional network of federally supported agencies responsible for assisting states' early childhood efforts. Initial funding came from a collaborative effort between the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for the regional labs to plan and conduct

We convened the Forum to identify, develop, and promote linkages in the community that foster the healthy development of young children, birth through age eight, and their families.

a series of National Policy Symposia and regional meetings focused on improving linkages between early childhood education and early elementary schools. With additional guidance from NCREL's Early Childhood Advisory Council, it became apparent that this directive would best be met by focusing on *interagency collaboration.*

The agenda reflected the uniqueness of the Forum. There were relatively few speakers. Most of the Forum was dedicated to bringing the participants together with individuals they needed to know. Collaborative work groups were formed, first by affiliation, then across agencies and states, and finally by state.

After Michael Kirst's keynote address, which focused on the problems of and potential solutions to collaboration, the first collaborative group was formed by *affiliation*: Eight groups of 15-20 people representing Head Start, State affiliates of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), Child Care; Local Education Agencies; State, County, Local Health and Human Service Agencies; State Departments of Education; Parents; Universities; Intermediate Service Agencies; and Policy. These affiliation groups identified agencies with whom they *currently* collaborate, proposed linkages for agencies with whom they *would like* to collaborate, and brainstormed pertinent themes and issues for further investigation and discussion. In addition, the groups identified the three most critical issues surrounding interagency collaboration which they later shared with their peers. These group meetings were the catalyst for stimulating and challenging conversation during the networking reception that followed.

Whether a parent, educator, policymaker, service provider, or a business or community leader, Forum participants were told they DO possess the skills and talents necessary to make change...

The second day opened with an invigorating session led by Lois Engstrom, Early Childhood and Adult Education Specialist from the Minnesota Department of Education. Dr. Engstrom spoke about how the state of Minnesota developed a vision and collaborative strategies for legislation that affect *all* young children, not just those categorized as at-risk or disabled.

Following was truly one of the Forum highlights: a panel discussion with a question-and-answer session. The panel was moderated by an aide to the former governor of Illinois, and consisted of a parent, Head Start coordinator, public school administrator, a state human resources director, and professor of early childhood education and policy. The panel members spoke of their personal struggles and strategies for success with collaboration. They focused on not only what Forum participants could achieve within their own agency, but also how to empower the community for support.

Participants then moved into their second collaborative group: across agencies and states. Their task was to develop a vision for an effective, comprehensive system of services that meets the needs of young children and families.

During lunch, Forum participants were addressed by Bob Kustra, the Lieutenant Governor of Illinois. The Lieutenant Governor is also an educator and his remarks were well received.

After lunch, seven state groups formed, charged to create a vision for the children in their state and to identify policies that help or hinder the outcomes they desired. They also focused on what they could realistically do to make a difference.

Michael Kirst ended the Forum by synthesizing what had transpired over the two days and gave insights into what can happen if participants follow through with their commitments.

Over the two days, Forum participants listened eagerly as the speakers shared their experiences and thoughts. Our ultimate charge to them, however, was that *they*, the participants, were truly the experts. Whether a parent, educator, policymaker, service provider, or a business or community leader, Forum participants were told they DO possess the skills and talents necessary to make change in their own agencies, communities, and states because change doesn't begin at the federal, state, or local level. It begins with each of us individually!

For the participants attending the conference, it was an opportunity to close the circle and to forge newer and stronger links as they discovered that, indeed, they were not alone in their pursuit of improving the lives of children and families across their states and the region.

This document is a synthesis of what took place at the Forum. For those of you who attended, we hope it will be a reminder of what transpired and of the commitments you made. For those of you who were unable to attend, we hope this document will be a catalyst for you to look beyond your own efforts—to link up with others in your own agency and with those from other agencies to develop a comprehensive, integrated, and family-focused system of services for young children and their families.

Linda G. Kunesh, Director
NCREL Early Childhood and
Family Education Program

"Within the American Indian culture there is a very strong emphasis on children. They are sacred. Within our [Indian] culture, there is a tradition of people coming together from all different places and gathering in a circle to talk about issues, and there is always something in the center, such as a symbolic flowering tree. That center today is a child."

From the welcoming speech of Vern LaPlante
American Indian Project Specialist
Midwest Regional Center for Drug-Free Schools and Communities

The Different Worlds of Preschools, Elementary Schools, and Children's Service Agencies:

Breaking Down Barriers and Creating Collaboration

A Synthesis of the Keynote Address by Michael Kirst

Addressing a crowd of 150 people concerned about young children and their families, keynote speaker Michael Kirst opened the *NCREL Early Childhood Connection* on collaboration by cautioning: "We have to face the facts that there is not some kind of easy magic bullet solution. This is hard to do." Why?

Conditions of children have drastically changed since the '70s: There has been a 50% increase in poverty and 25% of children are not covered by any kind of health services. Experts predict that half of all children will spend some time of their lives in a single-parent family. The changing labor force and overloaded social services agencies have led to a tremendous need for better childcare and preschool services.

Barriers to Collaboration

In addition, efforts at collaboration by service delivery systems have been frustrated by "deeply rooted barriers" such as:

- Delayed Involvement. Too often the focus is on acute problems rather than prevention. Agencies do not get involved until health and mental health problems reach the crisis stage.
- Service fragmentation. Attempts to aid children are not integrated. There may be four or five agencies working independently with a child or family, and each is not aware of the others' involvement. Consequently, the child ends up "bouncing around in the system like a pinball."
- Gaps in the system. Only 25-30% of the three- and four-year-olds eligible for Head Start are in the program.
- Inequitable services across jurisdictions. Attention is often focused on the differences in individual school funding instead of on the differences in funding between localities.
- Accountability of services. Most services that deal with children are largely unaccountable. They focus on how many times they saw a child or family, but never on whether the child got any better.

Referring to California's problems, Kirst complained, "We have a superintendent of schooling, but not a superintendent of children so part of our problem is that our reference point is our program or our institutions, but not the children."

How did we get to this rather sad state of affairs? Kirst cited a number of reasons:

- We all have different training. Educators, social welfare workers, healthcare workers, public administrators, and juvenile justice workers all attend separate schools and rarely have contact with each other. Since our initial professional training is separate, so, too, are the professional networks that we build.

"We have a superintendent of schooling, but not a superintendent of children so part of our problem is that our reference point is our program or our institutions, but not the children."

Dr. Michael Kirst is Co-Director of Policy Analysis for California Education and a Professor of Education and Business Administration at Stanford University, Stanford, CA.

- Legislative rules on confidentiality impose significant barriers in sharing information about the same child and family.
- There is a lack of communication across service delivery systems. Each acts as an independent entity. Kirst calls this "picket fence federalism": Each program or agency is an individual picket in the fence of the system. Attempts to overcome it have been marked by several problems:
  - "Projectitis." People in one project try to solve the deeply rooted problems by starting another one, a "bring-it-all-together project."
  - "Tentacles." People will have another agency attempt to intervene (or put their tentacles in) in areas that are already covered by other agencies. The end result is added-on functions rather than collaboration.
  - "Hot Potato." Problems get handed from agency to agency because no one wants to assume responsibility.
  - "Grafting." Projects are added on top of deeply rooted problems but don't deal with them in any significant way.

. . . school-linked services is an "interagency system linking schools and local and private human service agencies with the support of business, higher education, and other community resources to meet the interrelated education, social, and psychological needs of children."

Breaking Down Barriers

Kirst outlined approaches for breaking down deeply rooted barriers:

- Create more interprofessional programs for the initial training of professionals so that they get exposed to each other's problems and to each other.
- Create situations which bring diverse groups together for sustained work over a period of time.
- Find legitimate ways to deal with the confidentiality problem. Rather than hide behind the barriers of confidentiality, recognize that while situations arise that require this need, there are also ways of sharing the information and seeking parent approval.
- Examine the categorical program structure that exists and make changes where necessary. California now has a program, for example, called a "mega-waiver," in which multiple agencies can come together and seek a waiver to put their programs together.
- Link the information systems in a more systematic fashion. Agencies need to sit down and decide how collaboration could effect future outcomes for children, i.e., improved health, improved child development, and so on.

School-Linked Services

Once the barriers are lowered, successful collaboration becomes possible. There are many types of effective collaborative structures to consider. The form with which Kirst was most familiar was school-linked services, which takes place on or near school grounds. "School-linked" does not mean school-run or school-dominated. If this were viewed as a takeover of other social services by the schools it would be sure to fail. For one thing, the schools would rightly protest that they have enough trouble with their basic job of education without taking on the rest of these social services. If, on the other hand, the schools appear to be taking over, the other agencies will "resist, draw up the moat, and protect their turf."

"School-linked" means the school is the location for things to come together. It is not, however, the institution that funds all of the services or dominates their delivery. One definition of school-linked services is an "interagency system linking schools and local and private human service agencies with the support of business, higher

education, and other community resources to meet the interrelated educational, social, and psychological needs of children." This linkage empowers parents to better consume public and private services for their children. Right now these services are often spread around in various locations and the consumers usually have difficulty physically accessing them. There is a definite advantage to bringing these services together in just the one place.

What might one of these locations look like? First of all, the facility or set of facilities would be on or near school grounds and be open from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Then, it would have:

- School programs and afterschool recreation programs funded by various city governments and the public schools
- A nurse practitioner who, unlike school nurses, can administer some drugs and deal with some specific school area problems
- Mental health facilities, including counseling services
- On-site assistance from the social welfare offices
- Contact with various probation and other agencies

Of course, this facility would have to have funding. One important key to school-linked services is "stream diversion" which allows the system to be largely financially self-sustaining. It does not rely on huge amounts of new funding, but taps existing funding streams and deposits them into one pool. Preschool programs, for example, would be funded by existing federal or state preschool programs where there are sliding scale fees for parents who can afford them. Health services would be a diversion of the money that comes from various health streams.

"The problems, as you know—or you wouldn't be here—are flooding into the system and cannot be handled . . . strictly through pedagogical changes or changes in who governs what level of the schools in this regard."

What Does it Take to Make it Work?

To achieve the final vision of school-linked services requires a systems change. It is not an add-on project or program. Successful collaboration:

- Comes both from the top and the bottom simultaneously. At the top there must be an agreement among the key decision makers, such as the school board, the superintendent, or county children's services agencies. The key, however, is the "buy-in" of line workers: people at each school site who are involved in education, social work, health services, preschool, and child development services. Strong working relationships need to be maintained between the people directly dealing with children and their families and those at the middle management level. To make this work, the line workers must know each other, work well with each other, talk about the same children, try and clear away the eligibility overlaps, and try and deal with confidentiality in a responsible, yet responsive way. Management can help by providing case management flexibility for the people working at the service delivery site, adding incentives, and rewriting job descriptions that avoid isolating people from each other.
- Involves parents and children right at the start. Involving both the parents and the children empowers the parents and makes it easier for them to consume these services.
- Makes it clear that the school is a partner, but not in charge. The school is key in this school-linked vision. When Willie Sutton, the old bank robber, was asked why he robbed banks, he replied, "That's where the money is." Well, the school is where the children are.
- Links these services to additional school restructuring efforts. Schools need to connect the social services with school programs. Unless all the teachers are

invested with ownership in this systems change, it becomes just a grafted-on project. Restructuring that is viewed strictly as a curriculum project or school site decentralization has nothing to do with linking to services beyond the schools. "The problems, as you know—or you wouldn't be here—are flooding into the system and cannot be handled . . . strictly through pedagogical changes or changes in who governs what level of the schools in this regard."

- Entails a new system of accountability for interagency collaborations. Agencies need to track the outcomes of their combined services and determine the effectiveness of those services. A new data collection system should be created in which some of the agencies will have to share forms and formats, intake systems, and data on how children are progressing through the system.

"If we want to make this collaboration among agencies and parents a reality, we have to begin with a view that we must change the way we think about these services and the way the funding system can be linked."

System Implementation

Kirst outlined some important steps for system implementation:

- Obtain start-up capital.
- Step back and take a critical look at the current system.
- Pick specific sites.
- Set aside time to work with the people.
- Start building some collaborations among the various line workers.

Then, begin working, planning, and building together and start talking about funding streams. That takes some time and some effort. One of the first steps requires venture capital, or "glue money." Glue money cements the system together for start-up planning, for building information systems, for creating commitment among the line workers, and for planning for financing. Funding sources could be foundations or some of the categorical programs. California, for example, used $80 million in uncommitted drug and alcohol abuse money to fund their program. A word of warning, though: A lot of foundations create problems because all they do is fund more projects and spread the dreaded disease of projectitis. When the funding source is gone, so, too, is the project.

State Role

The state will be an important player in this change process. First, it is the state's decision as to where to obtain the venture capital. Second, the state should make it possible to waive various requirements across agencies. California, for example, has a multidepartment, interagency mega-waiver statute now that operates across agencies. In addition, the state can play a role in technical assistance, as well as helping with systems that will work on outcome indicators.

Summing it Up

"As I said earlier, this won't be easy. It's a big change in behavior. I want your vision to be changing the system rather than another project. How can we rethink the fundamental way we do business rather than making changes in marginal increments with everything else in the system left in place? If we want to make this collaboration among agencies and parents a reality, we have to begin with a view that we must change the way we think about these services and the way the funding system can be linked. Some of the people here can play the role locally or at the state level. Leadership doesn't have to come from the school system. It can come from any of the people here and any of the various agencies involved."

Collaboration by Affiliation

Work Groups by Affiliation

In keeping with the uniqueness of the Forum, participants were divided into eight groups (15-20 each), designated by affiliation. Each work group was charged with the task of identifying agencies with whom they maintain current collaborative efforts and to propose linkages with agencies they are not currently working with, but feel that a collaboration would be beneficial. In addition, each group was asked to list pertinent themes and issues for further investigation, discussion, and information. To close this interactive, exploratory process, each group was directed to reach consensus on the three *most critical* issues affecting interagency collaboration.

The eight work groups represented the following affiliations:

- Head Start, State Affiliates of NAEYC, Child Care
- Local Education Agencies
- State, County, Local Health and Human Service Agencies
- State Departments of Education
- Parents
- Universities
- Intermediate Service Agencies
- Policy and Advocacy Groups

The responses reflect an eclectic and wide-ranging roster of both current and desired linkages with assorted agencies. The message, however, is clear—**people want to communicate with one another.** People want to know how to access key players in other agencies in order to expand their present network, and meet the individual and collective needs of young children and families.

Current Collaborations

To be truly effective, the Forum participants agreed that *every* agency must be involved in some form of collaboration. In their list of current agency collaborations and affiliations, the work groups did indeed have an impressive list of partnerships including relationships with county departments, state agencies, schools (from day care to higher education), community, and local and state government. While these collaborations are instrumental to the success of each agency and the services they provide, the groups noted that far more collaborations need to exist in order to curtail the fragmentation that surrounds the current delivery system.

Proposed Linkages

Proposed linkages with new agencies were almost unanimous throughout all the groups. While their lists reflected and resembled current agency collaborations, there

was an obvious void in the *number* of collaborations across all agencies. Parents and parent advocacy groups, educational institutions, daycare centers, local businesses, and social service agencies were considered to be some of the more important organizations to pursue future collaborations. There were many areas recommended in the health services field including hospitals, private and public health providers, and mental health groups. The work groups were particularly interested in fostering relationships with the Department of Children and Family Services and the Department of Social Services. The constant rise in juvenile crime was reflected in the groups' concern with the juvenile justice system. They expressed a strong interest in communicating with Juvenile Court Judges, The Attorney General's Office, local family court systems, correctional facilities, and The Department of Corrections.

Critical Issues

Participants had little trouble choosing themes and issues they wished to discuss further. Though they came from eight different "affiliations" that seldom collaborated, their answers showed that the same problems affected them all. Almost all called for a shared philosophy or vision and they expressed concerns about funding issues and the fragmentation of services.

Leadership was a prevalent theme in many respects. Leadership issues, the groups reflected, concerned city and county governments, as well as parents, businesses, and agency personnel. The role of the parent and issues of cultural awareness in the schools were also noted. They cited a lack of common terminology across agencies. Like Kirst, the participants were most concerned with the issue of confidentiality and the barriers erected over turf issues. As might be expected, the specific themes and issues targeted for further discussion by each group formed the basis for their selection of three critical issues (one group chose four).

Head Start, State Affiliates of NAEYC, Child Care

- Collaborative Planning
- Common Vision
- Appropriate Accountability
- Incentives for Collaboration

Local Education Agencies

- Identification of Existing Programs/Delivery Systems
- Identification of Successful Programs
- Influencing Local Legislators

State, County, and Local Health and Human Service Agencies

- Commitment to Collaboration
- Strategic Training
- Outcome Reporting

State Departments of Education

- Common Vision
- Vision Focus on Families
- Policy Waivers and Common Language

Parents

- Incentives for Increased Parent Involvement
- Better Flow of Information - Top Down and Bottom Up
- Simplify Process of Accessing Services

Universities

- Interdisciplinary Training - Preservice and Inservice
- Lack of Status/Financial Support for Early Childhood Educators
- Lack of Whole Child Perspective

Intermediate Service Agencies

- Commitment To Collaboration
- Geographic and Jurisdictional Boundaries
- Turf Issues and Language Barriers

Policy

- Family As Main Focus
- Participatory Leadership - Collaborative Decision Making
- Additional Resources Needed

"Waiter, There's a Fly in My Soup"

An Apologia to Mixed Metaphors

By Paula Wolff

The panel conducted on Tuesday, October 15, at the *NCREL Early Childhood Connection Forum* included a range of panelists, commenting on collaboration from varied perspectives. Paul Vivian, Connecticut's Director of Family Resource Centers, who grew up with 16 other children and was, therefore, "quite used to sitting down to a meal of soup," assured the audience that he knew good collaboration was like a good soup: different people bring different things to it and what is brought collectively creates a final satisfying product. Everyone on the panel similarly extolled the virtues of collaboration, yet there was still a fly in the ointment—or the soup—because it was clear from the presenters and comments from others that collaboration is neither a way of life nor achieved without major obstacles being overcome.

The self-styled "recovering bureaucrat" on the panel, Ben Perez, Assistant Superintendent from the Lansing Public Schools, praised and encouraged close scrutiny of the Dade County school experiment, which is carrying collaboration to an advanced stage of a "school-run" system including non-traditional suppliers of services. The mission of collaboration advocates, Perez argued, is to create awareness of collaborative efforts and overcome traditional constraints, such as labor contracts. In contrast to those who denounced the "projectitis epidemic," using spare cash to create collaborative projects that are not integral to existing systems, Perez said he was a supporter of projects. They cause or permit people to do things differently. The illness of projectitis, he claims, is the failure to market projects successfully; marketing could make positive information available to be used as the basis for systemic change.

Following the Perez admonition to market projects, both Saundra Van, Head Start Director, Community and Economic Development Association (CEDA) of Cook County and Paul Vivian talked about collaborative efforts of their agencies. The CEDA program has projects ranging from substance abuse prevention training to career development in early education to day care for juveniles with behavioral problems. The Connecticut program is based at eight school sites and focuses on outreach to families of newborns. In response to birth announcements in the newspaper, families receive a letter from the school telling parents that a desk is being held for their child in five years. And, in the meantime, the letter continues, "we have a program for your family and baby in the school." For many parents, whom Vivian understatedly characterized as not having had "a wonderful experience in school," it is important to get them into the school. Once there, parents find a pre-school program where 5th and 6th graders read to kids; before and after school programs that run when parents work—summers and all but five vacation days a year; positive youth programs; parenting classes; and adult education classes.

At a more theoretical level, both Vivian and Nancy Peterson, education professor from the University of Kansas, highlighted the importance of the process of collaboration: involving all players (especially parents) in planning programs and breaking down existing barriers (much as Perez suggested), by bringing janitors to

. . . good collaboration is like a good soup: different people bring different things to it and what is brought collectively creates a final satisfying product.

Dr. Paula Wolff is a Distinguished Fellow with the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and Chief Executive Officer of the Chicago Cluster Initiative. She served as Director of Transition Teams during Illinois Governor James Edgar's transition and as Director of Programs, Policy, and Planning under former Illinois governor, James Thompson.

the table to discuss changing their schedules to facilitate schools being open during non-traditional times or by using private family day-care homes as a resource to families in the program. Peterson pointed out that the process is salutary but very difficult. There has to be a lot of deliberation among the various agencies and turf issues must be put aside. In Kansas, the lesson learned was that while we are "all prone to do it ourselves because we have 'responsibility' for it, collaboration requires doing it together"—like Vivian's soup.

According to Peterson, collaboration takes lots of time; it is a set of complex strategies—not in single linear steps; and there is no "magic antidote" for multi-variables which complicate the process. Her advice to each player in collaboration (or soup ingredient bearer): focus on kids; be willing to give up control; believe the outcome will be a collaborative process; and talk, talk, talk until you are actually engaged in the *process* of collaboration. Vivian would add another element to this: since we have limited resources, if we grab someone by his/her wallet, the hearts and minds will follow. Use collaboration to enhance each participant's resources.

. . . we conferees were encouraged determinedly to backstroke onward to collaboration, talking together, and popping Tums all the while.

Susan Walter's remarks as a parent offered a complementary view from a user perspective. Her prepared remarks are reprinted here in full. An extemporaneous comment may have said it all about her gentle persistence to meld the systems (which she considered "more of a maze than anything else") to the needs of her child and her family: "the special education administrator, I think, pops a Tum every time I call."

Good collaboration is a soup: the flies in the ointment are the inherent systemic obstacles to collaboration (e.g., agency mandates/rules or union provisions) and human nature which individualizes and categorizes tasks from a personal perspective. The panel beseeched our conference participants to get past these obstacles by talking through how to get to collaboration. This fits the punch line of the joke: "Waiter, what is this fly doing in my soup?" "The backstroke." And so too, we conferees were encouraged determinedly to backstroke onward to collaboration, talking together, and popping Tums all the while.

Or, to change the joke's focus, but to emphasize the need for all of us to become missionaries on collaboration:

"Waiter, there's a fly in my soup."

"Shh, keep your voice down or everyone will want one."

One Family's Perspective

Seeing Children as Their Families See Them

By Susan Walter

When Jennifer was born, my husband and I already had one child—a two-year-old son, Timothy, who was healthy, energetic, and a constant delight. We had no reason to believe that Jennifer would be any different. We brought her home to take her place amidst the joyous and sometimes chaotic rituals of family life. However, as the first six months went by, it became increasingly apparent that Jennifer's growth and development were not on the right track.

After months of our worrying and searching, Jennifer was diagnosed with severe cerebral palsy with associated neurologic, orthopedic, and ophthalmic problems. There was no explanation for what went wrong or why, but the doctor told us that it would be in our best interest to accept that she would never go to regular schools, have feelings or friends as we do, take care of herself, or live independently. "What a shame," he said. "She is such a pretty girl."

When we brought Jennifer home after her diagnosis, I soon realized I had two choices—I could accept things as they were (love her and "let the chips fall" as the doctor said they would), or I could commit our family to making the best of a difficult situation by building on our strengths. We waited six long months to get into the early intervention system. But the relationships I established with her caregivers set the stage for me to discover my strengths and abilities as a parent and advocate of my child. Many professionals were willing to share my vision and work *with* me and for Jennifer in a team approach. This made all the difference in the world for our family, especially for Jennifer.

Was the program as comprehensive and coordinated as it could have been? No. But by being positive and persistent (my battle cry), I convinced at least some professionals to share bits and pieces of their expertise with me. Together we worked to translate "she can't," "she doesn't," and "she will not be able to" into "she can," "she does," and "she will." Within this positive context, we were able to translate therapies and services into activities that were meaningful to our unique family life.

In the world of family, my dreams for Jennifer seem very common. However, the extent of her disability makes those dreams seem unique, if not unattainable, in the world of service delivery. It seems that the greatest challenge facing professionals is to see children as their families see them—not as cases, but as unique individuals who can take their place within families and communities with the proper support services.

It took tremendous effort and perseverance to find a path through the maze we call "the system" while at the same time preserving my faith in Jennifer's abilities. Along the way I have talked with many families, and I realize that the support I experienced was not equally distributed among all families in all communities. Throughout my journey I have seen that young children and the families who are loving and nurturing them—in their own way and to the best of their ability—have many needs that are similar but at the same time are unique and individual. In that light, I would like to suggest several basic components to service delivery systems

"It seems that the greatest challenge facing professionals is to see children as their families see them . . ."

Susan Walter is a parent and serves as a parent representative on the Illinois Interagency Coordinating Council, a statewide interagency council serving the needs of young children with disabilities and their families.

that are commonly heard in many professional fields and discuss them in perhaps a unique way—the family way.

Services Must be Geographically and Culturally Accessible

One of the most common problems challenging families is the fact that what they need is always somewhere else. This means packing up and going to the source of help—across one or more counties or perhaps to the other side of a major city—provided you have a means of transportation. Distance in rural areas can mean isolation and sparsity of services for families. When community access is not possible, service delivery systems should look at how they can go to the communities in need, i.e. traveling professional teams.

"One of the most common problems challenging families is the fact that what they need is always somewhere else."

We must be committed to family preservation and strengthening. With that commitment, we must accept diversity and respect not only a family's value system but their primary cultural values as well. The importance of an extended family is one that should be respected and built on. The concept of "helping our own" can be fostered to bond families with their geographic cultural communities.

The strong independence my rural upbringing instilled in me was shaken by my daughter's diagnosis of a disability. However, this has turned out to be my greatest asset. I believe many cultures and communities have this kind of independent streak which can be nurtured into a strength that will change the future for children with special needs and their families.

Services Should be Comprehensive and Coordinated

A service delivery system that will truly benefit children and families should include an array of services. Health and social services, in addition to education, should be combined to benefit the total child and family. We must insist on high quality from our service providers and the assurance that no matter where a family lives they can access services as often as their situation necessitates. "Watered-down" service systems offer little benefit for the future of families and communities.

I believe it is necessary for all of us—policymakers, service professionals, and all citizens—to see families as systems unto themselves that are growing and changing constantly and that have their own structures, resources, priorities, and patterns of interaction. This concept of family systems should be the heart of all laws, policies, and services we fashion to meet the health, social, and educational needs of children with disabilities—or who are at risk for developmental delays—and their families. The path to interagency collaboration will most likely be rough and full of potholes. But with flexible, creative attitudes and the common goal of preserving and strengthening families, family visions and professional expertise can intertwine and make dreams reality for young children and their families.

A quote from Thomas Jefferson comes to mind: "The care of life and happiness, and not their destruction, is the first and only legitimate object of good government."

Services Must be Family-Focused for Maximum Effectiveness

Professionals at all levels must believe that families—whatever their makeup—are the constants in a young child's life and that the family unit provides the most viable atmosphere for young children to thrive in. Philosophies of service delivery should emulate "positive help," which provides and encourages enabling experiences for the family, acknowledges the fact that all people have competencies and the ability to develop new ones, and enables families to identify the kinds of programs and services that will best address their goals and concerns. In contrast, "help" that takes away decision-making power, "help" that is incongruent with the values of the family or with what they feel they need, will foster dependence and alienate the

family from successful partnerships with professionals.

Positive experiences in early intervention set the stage for the future independence and nurturing of families. Our experience with early intervention was that kind of positive experience. That influence impacts my attitude and abilities today as much as it did more than five years ago. This was especially important on the day that a doctor said, "I think you should start looking for a place to put her so you can get on with your life. She will never have anything to give to society." Jennifer was two years old at the time.

Families should be included as partners at all levels in the policymaking process so that family-centered principles will be embedded not only in policies and programs but in the philosophies that shape attitudes about children and families.

Programs and Services Must be Community Based

Young children and their families should be able to receive desired services in the most natural environment possible. No child should be isolated by educational labels, specialized classrooms, or recreational programs. Quite often parents are placed in the position of having to choose between what we are told is a quality—though segregated—program and an integrated program with inappropriate or unavailable services.

Families have dreams for their children that include not only vocational success, but friendship and community respect. Friendships are a natural part of life, and too often we exclude children with disabilities from the opportunities to make those friendships that will bond them to the communities they live in. We must strive for the goal that all children be able to live, to thrive, play and grow, to be educated, and to receive support they and their families need in their home communities.

Jennifer attends a multiple handicapped classroom in a town 45 minutes away. She has many opportunities to interact with her non-disabled peers and has many friends. However, when she comes home she has no one to "hang out" with. Because of this, I feel her community roots are shallow. Most of the hometown people have seen her around and accept her. The little old ladies pat her on the head and say, "You have such a special child." However, the relationships and interactions just aren't happening. Should I uproot our family and move to another city for her? Should I force her into our community school and quite probably sacrifice quality for community, knowing full well it would be a battle every step of the way?

These kinds of questions as well as many others are never far from mind for families who have children with special needs. If, however, policymakers and professionals could unite and commit resources as well as channel engery to a common vision, families and their young children would find themselves encircled by a family-focused, community-based, coordinated system of services and supports. My daughter Jennifer is bright, curious, and has a wonderful sense of humor and is fun. I love her, of course, but I also LIKE her. I enjoy the person she is, and I realize that the joy and laughter I thought would never be mine again were never lost at all. The difficult questions will result in positive outcomes for our family because of our strong foundation. I want that vision for all children and families.

"Positive experiences in early intervention set the stage for the future independence and nurturing of families."

We have stressed throughout this Forum that our common vision must be for a delivery system that is integrated, comprehensive, and, above all, family-focused. We have emphasized that if we are to make this happen, parents must be empowered as equal team members. Because we strongly believe these precepts, we feel it is imperative that we include in this report a perspective from a family's point of view. While Susan Walter talks specifically about the special needs of her child, the frustrations she and her family have encountered are universal and have been shared by diverse groups of children and families throughout the country.

Collaborating Across Agencies and States

Work Groups by Interstate/Interdisciplinary

Following the panel discussion on strategies for successful collaboration, participants broke into 12 groups structured so each group had representatives from a number of different agency perspectives and state affiliations. The tasks of these groups were to develop a vision for an effective, comprehensive service system meeting the needs of young children and families, to discuss how to better collaborate to meet this vision, and to identify specific actions that could be undertaken within the next year to move incrementally toward meeting that vision.

Each group addressed these issues differently, suggesting the many manners in which collaboration may be approached. This summary seeks to combine the varied group responses to show the variety of activities that can be undertaken when people work together creatively to explore options.

Vision—Characteristics of a New Early Childhood System

Participants were asked to list the characteristics of an integrated, comprehensive, family-focused system for children and families responsive to a continuum of needs within the community.

This system, they said, is

- family-centered
- culturally sensitive
- coordinated
- integrated
- cost effective
- community-based
- accessible
- convenient

In addition, the perfect system

- shares a common goal
- respects diversity
- co-mingles funding
- provides health services
- empowers parents
- collaborates with agencies
- taps into all funding sources
- advocates services for all children
- publicizes "what works"
- forms business/community partnerships
- provides training for the child/family

Linkage Strategies

Participants were asked to consider ways agencies and services providers could better link with others to create the systems they are looking for. The answers reflected a broad range of possibilities:

- Eliminate funding guidelines.
- Host early childhood fairs where services and providers come together as a team to market early childhood to consumers.
- Bring the medical community into these issues.
- Have a shared vision that will allow funding to stream together and avoid fragmentation of services.
- Create non-categorical funding for children and families.
- Develop a Directory of Services.
- Develop parent surveys.
- Expand collaboration to include parents and volunteer groups.
- Have comprehensive services programs that are locally derived instead of imposed.
- Identify key players.
- Integrate preservice and inservice training across disciplines and in the community.
- Integrate health curriculum into community services.
- Invite legislators to the Forum.
- Involve other agencies from the beginning.
- Involve teachers—they should know of other services and placements.
- Pool resources to help teachers and child care providers attend meetings.
- Reduce "turf wars" by enhancing professional/parental collaboration.
- Strengthen collaboration between programs that serve infants and toddlers with disabilities and programs that serve preschoolers with disabilities.
- Strengthen local interagency coordinating councils through augmenting and enhancing relationships.
- Utilize all existing resources.

Possible Action Steps

Finally, participants were asked to brainstorm and come up with three do-able action steps that would in one year move them incrementally toward accomplishing their vision. The following is a summary of their recommendations:

Identify:

- Business and community people who can contribute to the funding and facilitate the vision
- Existing services and interagency agreements
- Needs and existing resources and apply existing resources to those needs
- Agencies not yet involved in collaboration

Provide:

- Cross-agency training
- Incentives for participation

Share:

- Information with consumers at group meetings
- Inservice opportunities

Develop:

- A vision and then an action plan to accomplish the vision
- Strategies to access decision makers

Additional action steps suggested were:

- Replicate this conference at a state and local level.
- Exchange information on programs.
- Promote institutional policies that include parents and families in designing, implementing, and evaluating an action plan.
- Include expectations for collaboration across agencies in individual employee's job descriptions.
- Invite parents to every planning meeting.
- Try to reduce categorical funding.

Breaking Down Walls

Synthesized from a speech by Illinois Lieutenant Governor Bob Kustra

In his speech before the *NCREL Early Childhood Connection*, the Illinois Lieutenant Governor shared his thoughts about the education priorities set by the new governor of Illinois, James Edgar. "We are not unlike a lot of other states," he said, "including New York and California, who have experienced very difficult budgetary problems and are confronted with deficits that we would rather not have and have been forced to either find ways of raising revenues or cutting back."

Kustra explained that Illinois has had to rethink a good deal of what it had planned for social services delivery systems and education because of a pledge made during the election campaign. Edgar had promised that the state would keep an unpopular tax surcharge, but once the funds were gone, it would live within its budget. Living on that pledge has not been easy, said Kustra.

Kustra noted that across the country, as state funds decreased, less money was available for education. In Illinois, he said, the request for a 43% increase in early childhood education funding was cut from $27 million to $8.6 million. It is important to recognize, said Kustra, that a state's economy and the nation's economy are what drive what everyone can do. During the Persian Gulf Crisis when people were glued to their television sets, he explained, Illinois suffered a $75 million loss in sales tax revenue—money that still has not come back.

Illinois' revenue structure, according to Kustra, is capable of providing more for people in need, but doesn't yet have adequate funding. "I think no matter where you are in the Middle West," he said, "you're looking at sales taxes carefully and you're looking at income taxes carefully . . . and you're hoping and praying every day that more of those dollars will become available." Until that time, however, Illinois, as well as other states, must decide to do something with what they have, said Kustra. In Illinois, that translated into finding ways of capitalizing on the state's strengths and of doing things differently. The result is a program, Project SUCCESS, for trying to improve effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery.

Illinois Governor Jim Edgar commissioned Lt. Governor Kustra to develop Project SUCCESS after they had made it part of their education agenda during the campaign. Kustra brought together a Coordination of Social Services Action Group made up of Illinois representatives from education, community-based social service groups, and top level people from the state human service agencies. This group met extensively last summer and "thanks to people like Judy Langford Carter" incorporated strengths and ideas from other states to develop the framework for Project SUCCESS which includes two overriding goals: improving family well-being and improving collaboration of service delivery. The Action Group also recommended that the model must be flexible to work in any community in the state, that local communities must take the lead in deciding how to make it work in their schools, that parents must play a key role in the development and implementation of the model, that it is available to all children in the school, and that all services are provided in a family-focused and friendly manner with collaboration as the key.

It is important to recognize . . . that the states' economy and the nation's economy are what drive what everyone can do.

Dr. Bob Kustra is the Lieutenant Governor of Illinois and a teacher of 20 years. He is also a professor in the School of Education at Northwestern University. Kustra is a former Illinois senator and former member of the House of Representatives.

As Chairman of the National Conference of Lt. Governors' Education At-Risk Subcommittee, Kustra used the Project SUCCESS framework as the model that all states should examine to address linking social services to the needs of children in schools and their families. This model would be one that could be used in every state.

Though the program is still in the early stages, Kustra wanted to share his progress with Forum participants to let them know "that somewhere in state government, and in other governments as well, there are people who are on the same wavelength."

Describing himself as a believer in collaboration, Kustra admitted that, "We're not as advanced and we're not as expert as you are and we have to listen carefully to what you tell us, but we're here and we're ready to join hands with you and move forward in new ways of collaborating . . . If you ask me where is my bias and how do I approach this subject of collaboration, I would probably say it has to start there at the school building and let everybody work and focus around that," he said. Kustra likened his state's efforts to those in which other states were involved: Project SUCCESS shares the same goals and objectives and is the same attempt to try to find ways of linking the classroom with social services delivery systems across a large state. Local communities are being asked to work with elementary schools to identify the needs of their children and the needs of their families. As local resources are identified to meet those needs, local communities will be encouraged to bring these resources together. The goal, said Kustra, is to develop a service delivery model based on successful programs currently being used across the states in selected sites and to make it available to all schools through Project SUCCESS, in effect, bringing the classroom together with social service agencies.

"If you ask me where is my bias and how do I approach this subject of collaboration, I would probably say it has to start there at the school building and let everybody work and focus around that."

To make Project SUCCESS work, Illinois state agencies will be required to "reorder themselves, to redirect themselves, to find new ways of offering their services." Kustra described Illinois's decentralized social services delivery system as one with diverse departments spread about the state. All of them, he said, are attempting to do good things, but sometimes find themselves off in different directions and at the same time, all trying to serve the needs of children.

Kustra, who also is a veteran teacher, depicted the nature of the state's problems as one characterized by frustration on the part of teachers. Concerned about "playing" social worker, law enforcer, or parent, teachers have sought outside help, but have had difficulty discovering which agency or agencies can best serve families. So before calling in experts and the social services people to help facilitate the new model, Kustra explained, the Governor ordered the state department directors to "look beyond bureaucratic barriers and take down the walls of the Department of Public Aid and to put your department alongside the Department of Children and Family Services and make sure you can work together to serve kids . . . and together help us bring this model to a point where we can offer it to people across the state of Illinois."

Kustra believes that agencies are beginning to respond. They united 50-60 social service personnel at a meeting to work on Project SUCCESS, which is now "on the verge of going public." An announcement was expected to be made within the next week inviting social services providers and people from local communities and schools to attend one of five information conferences across the state and receive information on how to apply to become one of the five model sites.

Kustra confessed to having strong feelings in the beginning about how this model would work. He admitted to being what his kids called "a tough father figure" who had strong ideas on how his kids should get through school and how they should solve their problems. Sometimes, he said, they say, "Dad, back off. We are doing all right and we've got our own way of doing this." When he sat down with Judy Carter and others to develop the five pilot projects, he could visualize the perfect plan: "I had this idea—boy, we're going to impose this on these folks, and when they apply, they apply our way and our way is going to be the best." Thanks to the group who "prevailed upon me," Kustra said he soon realized that this

attitude would not encourage collaboration. You have to give people a little more space, he explained.

"We have tried to establish a program which will bring to our table five very different models of collaboration," said Kustra. In some cases, he said, the school might be the absolute focus of the program, but in other cases it may be a local community agency, a city, or a social service provider. Once they explain the nature of the delivery system they want, Kustra said, they will "sit back and allow these folks to experiment, and then we'll choose these five sites." Once chosen, they will be allowed to work on their own. "I think we're going to have five very interesting collaborative models with a lot of breathing room," said Kustra, "and a lot of elbow space for folks to work out their own problems at the local level."

Funding, Kustra asserted, is going to be a problem. He indicated that the state was working with public and private ventures to create partnerships to obtain the necessary funding to make the programs work. In addition, Illinois agencies were being asked to reorder their priorities and make some money available.

Expressing his admiration for the audience and their work, Kustra confided that he had stopped by to let everyone know that, in his opinion, the constitutional officers in the states had received the message. "Now we stand alongside of you," he said, "ready to cooperate and collaborate with you in ways that will make the lives of our children so much richer . . . ."

"Now we stand alongside of you ready to cooperate and collaborate with you in ways that will make the lives of our children so much richer . . . "

State Collaborations

Work Groups by State

Collaboration begins when diverse groups meet, discuss, and identify issues that affect them all. They then can act upon mutual interests and concerns. Forum participants were brought together by state and asked to pool their thoughts and ideas about creating a vision of the future for their children.

Desired Outcomes

Representatives of the seven states were asked to identify desired outcomes for their children:

- What did they expect their young people to know by the time they reached adulthood?
- What kinds of social characteristics should they have?
- What kinds of skills would ensure them jobs in today's society?

The diversity of urban/rural communities and economic prosperity and hardships disappeared as state boundaries dissolved and each group echoed similar concerns. Their answers reflected a growing awareness of this country as a global village struggling in a competitive marketplace driven by technology. They repeated concerns voiced by businessmen and squarely addressed the realities of the needs for a new and improved work force. Our children, they said, need to be aware of this global perspective. They need to understand the critical importance of being creative problem solvers in a world where isolated assemblyline jobs are being rapidly replaced by teamwork and complex technology. As team players, they must be able to act upon ideas, be independent thinkers, and decision makers. In the rapidly changing business world where old jobs are being phased out and new ones created, children must have the skills to become lifelong learners.

In a world driven by technology, children will need the ability to access and process information as they grow to adulthood, both in their school/business and personal lives. Each state agreed that they wanted healthy, happy, self-confident, and self-disciplined children who have a sense of hope for their futures. They wanted their children to use their knowledge and information to become law-abiding, responsible citizens who respected and appreciated the diversity of others and who contributed to their society. Here, too, in their children's personal lives, they recognized that to be successful, their children would need to be independent thinkers, able to identify choices and make decisions. They wanted their children to grow into giving, healthy (both physically and mentally), caring (about others and the environment) adults who were whole people, able to appreciate and enjoy art, music, and literature. In communities where traditional neighborhoods are mutating into zones of alienation and isolation, concerned adults want their children to experience a sense of community and membership. Faced with the breakdown of the family, they support positive family affiliations that model a commitment to family, foster good parenting skills, and promote healthy relationships with others.

States' Policies

The state groups were asked to think about the agencies and organizations within their states in terms of how the policies of these groups might hinder or facilitate the desired outcomes. As might be expected, each state highlighted different issues.

Illinois

Due to the number of Illinois participants, the group was split into two. While they agreed on such positive policies as parent and family involvement, waivers, Head Start programs, and appropriate practice, they diverged in their other suggestions. Group A commended their state's site-based decision making, the effectiveness of advocacy groups, the Early Intervention Services System Act, and the creation of the Administration for Children and Families. The Regional Technical Assistance System and Illinois Technical Assistance Project, both for children with special needs, were praised, as were the state's efforts in lead poisoning screening. Group B focused their attention on evaluation/outcomes and broad-based portfolio review. In addition, they cited corporate involvement and professional/community organizations as positive. The work of the unions was felt to be both a plus and a minus. Also of importance, they said, were federal and state public monies and licensing standards.

The groups' focus also split on policies they found to be hindrances. Group A's concerns focused on policy and funding problems, while group B's concentrated on people issues. Group A worried about the impact of federal policy and a general lack of connection on the state and federal level. Illinois policy, they felt, doesn't look at the accountability of benefits, only at numbers. In addition, they said, we need a policy that supports a continuum of universal services, and we need more incentives for family participation in policymaking. Funding in the state, they felt, suffered from too many regulations or restrictions on how the money was to be used. They were concerned that funding resources are not based in communities, and they worried about the power issues that arise over funding.

The children were the chief focus of Group B. Children and families are not a priority in Illinois, they said. They cited ineffective Child Care regulations, negative reinforcement, standardized tests, homogeneous grouping, and segregation (also a concern of Group A) as policies that hinder outcomes. Too often, they said, kids are made to fit the program rather than making the program fit them. Children are faced with inappropriate educational expectations in the public school system, they charged.

Indiana

As with many of the other states, Indiana participants cited local control as a definite advantage. They praised a blending of funds, programs, waivers, and staff as factors in achieving their expected outcomes. Unlike several other states, Indiana listed political tension and welfare as positive influences. Advocacy efforts by organizations such as the Kiwanis were acknowledged, as well as beneficial programs such as Step Ahead, Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT), and Medicare. Indiana members appreciate the support of their State Board of Education and federal programs.

Indiana participants were disturbed not only by their state's lack of vision and common mission, but also by its lack of knowledge on Early Childhood issues. Politics, they said, is a definite problem. The State Board of Education, seen as a positive force, also appears in Indiana's negative column. Members find themselves hindered by some of the Board's certification requirements, rules, and regulations. State and federal regulations also are found to be restrictive. Like many of the states, issues of turf, both within and out of state, undermine collaborative efforts. Additional policies that hinder outcomes are ISTEP (Indiana Statewide Testing of Educational Progress), and retention/transition.

Iowa

Iowa's inventory took a slightly different skew than the other states. The group listed grant money as an important factor and commended area education agencies' and Department of Human Services' cooperation in serving as a catalyst for communication. The remainder of their list detailed the policies they wished to see take place. They wished to see a set of guidelines developed at the state level between the Department of Human Services and the Department of Education. Among institutions of higher education, they felt the need for more coordination and communication. Additionally, they said they would like to request Teacher Assistants from the Regents Center for Early Development, and document the value of cooperation.

While grant money was felt to be a plus, the competition to receive the funds was a definite negative. Participants were disturbed by the "turf" battles being fought among higher education institutions and by the lack of communication at state and local levels. Job descriptions, they felt, did not promote a collaborative focus on "school issues." School Age Child Care licensing regulations were also cited as a problem.

Michigan

State funding for drug prevention topped Michigan's positive list. Also important, the group said, was an increasing trend toward multicultural awareness and activities and programs that help facilitate choice making. Human services coordinating bodies were cited as instrumental in getting the needed services to the children. Additional policies listed were Child Find; special education law Part H, serving infants and toddlers; and Public Act 116.

Michigan participants found that independent groups with differing expectations were a hindrance to successful outcomes. A lack of state coordination also presented difficulties, they said, as did debilitating budget cuts. The quality and quantity of program efforts were not at the levels desired. Participants voiced concerns over the repercussions of placing labels on children. In the schools, they said, were a lack of both curriculum-based assessment and self-esteem in regular education curriculum.

Minnesota

Minnesota participants applauded the state's firm commitment to Early Childhood Education, both in terms of Early Childhood and Family Education as seen in Early Childhood Family Education legislation and support by corporations and charitable organizations. Commitment to innovation and change, to accountability, to empowering local communities, and to communicating with each other were all characteristics cited as facilitators of positive outcomes for children. Local control by planning councils was cited as another valuable policy; yet, it was also included on their list of negative influences.

Some efforts, they feel, have been more hindered than helped by local planning councils and by state bureaucracies. Minnesota's focus, they said, was too much on deficits, not strengths. Restrictive state policy regarding funding streams was cited as a negative, as were licensure regulations. Participants worried that Minnesota's focus on children might be at the expense of the whole family. Services, they said, don't foster hope or healthy families, nor do they match desired outcomes. Of particular concern to them was the current Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) system.

Ohio

In Ohio, success in Early Childhood Education is driven by a common vision for collaboration in Early Childhood Education. This can be seen in the willingness of lawmakers to pass legislation and cluster legislation that addresses ECE issues.

Additionally, agencies have established interagency agreements to coordinate their efforts and provide comprehensive services. They are aided by the cooperation of strong professional groups. Efforts are under way to introduce appropriate curricula into the schools and to involve parent as advocates for change.

Areas of concern to the Ohio group focused on several issues. One was the continued use of inappropriate curriculum in many schools. A major obstacle to collaboration was the power struggle over "turf." Participants felt constrained by rules and funding restrictions as well as by restrictions imposed by unions and their contracts. They were concerned about the influence of negative home environments on the growth of the children and the parents who could not or would not make an effort to fight for their children's future. In addition, they felt that training programs that included only isolated groups had negative impacts.

Wisconsin

Wisconsin participants proudly pointed to their history of progressive child-care programs for children and families. They praised the state's openness to parent participation and its commitment to the concerns of families and children. An example they pointed out was that many child-care facilities follow NAEYC guidelines. State agencies and organizations, according to participants, have an overall commitment to be innovative and create change. Agencies share common mission statements and, thus, can work toward the same goals. "Models" such as Head Start provide guidance for those looking for successful programs. Participants also cited as helpful the use of Cooperative Educational Services Agencies as pathfinders to successful local programs.

Of concern to the Wisconsin group was what they referred to as a lack of a common vision across various government bodies such as the Governor's office and the Department of Public Instruction. State programs, they said, have too narrow a focus. The lack of a statewide holistic plan and difficulties in mixing funds were cited as major problem areas. Additionally, language and jargon barriers were prohibiting successful collaboration among local collaboration councils. As did Ohio, Wisconsin felt constrained by union restrictions.

Strategies for Overcoming Barriers

Finally, the groups were asked to identify strategies in their states to help overcome the barriers they identified. Two states answered:

Michigan

Michigan participants focused their efforts around the political arena. They recommended joining organized groups for political action and organizing fund raisers in homes to increase accessibility and thereby make the political process work for the citizens. Individuals, they suggested, could also take political action on their own.

Wisconsin

Suggestions from Wisconsin participants reflected their concern with the governing bodies of their state. They could work, they said, to secure the commitment of the Department of Health and Social Services, Department of Public Instruction, Department of Industry, Labor, and Human Relations, and the Governor. One method would be to send letters to them explaining the importance of collaborative efforts. Additionally, they would communicate on this subject to key members of the Governor's Commission on Families and Children. They also suggested requesting state meetings for information gathering under the auspices of the Governor's

Commission. Their final suggestions included replicating surrounding states' successful programs, i.e., Illinois' Project SUCCESS, and utilizing technology to facilitate communication via E-mail and fax.

The state collaboration groups closed with participants identifying the commitments they could make as individuals to move the system incrementally toward a more comprehensive, integrated service delivery system.

Reflections on the NCREL Early Childhood Forum

Synthesized from remarks by Michael Kirst

One of the main themes that pervaded the *NCREL Early Childhood Connection*, and upon which everyone agreed, was that collaboration is not easy. Speakers and conference participants alike talked about the barriers that made collaboration difficult, if not at times impossible. Yet, the prevailing feeling was not one of resignation. The presence of 150 participants was evidence of that. Conference participants came to the Forum seeking reassurance and guidance and the opportunity to meet and network with their peers. They left with new ideas for solutions and a resurgence of hope.

The Forum provided participants with an opportunity to discuss critical issues and problems and to share their experiences and solutions. Kirst reiterated several major discussion points:

- Geographic context is important in implementing collaboration. There are definable similarities between rural areas and between urban areas across states that must be considered. Rural Wisconsin and Minnesota, for example, have a lot in common, as do Chicago and Detroit. While general collaboration concepts and procedures exist, they must be tailored to a specific context. For instance, when accessing services, very rural areas may require distance technologies not needed in urban areas such as Chicago.
- State-level coordinating committees can play an important role in the change process. These were cited as being able to provide multiagency mega-waivers or provide the crucial venture capital to plan collaboration. The latter is important because collaboration takes so much time; it often cannot be financed solely by local agencies. However, state-level coordinating effectiveness depends on state context and on what state-level committees are supposed to do. "Many state-level children's committees I have analyzed do not have specific tasks to keep them focused on more than symbolic representation."
- What can be done to make collaborations last so they don't turn into just another temporary project? One answer was that successful collaborations depend partly on working relationships among mid- and working-level agency people. However, because the "cast of characters" changes, long-term collaboration depends also on an organized constituency backed by legal rights. (A good place to start in forming networks to organize such constituencies is at conferences such as this.) Parents must also play an important role, particularly if collaborations are built on family strengths and competencies and parents are given greater control of the services. Special attention must be paid to family cultural differences.
- New ways must be found for assessing children's outcomes. "Outcomes are the end product of our efforts and will hopefully improve through the kind of process this conference began."

There must be substantial change at every level of school personnel—the district leadership, middle management, principals, and teachers.

Dr. Michael Kirst is Co-Director of Policy Analysis for California Education and a Professor of Education and Business Administration at Stanford University, Stanford, CA.

Kirst outlined further criteria for successful school-linked integrated services:

- There must be substantial change at every level of school personnel—the district leadership, middle management, principals, and teachers.
- Schools should not attempt to dominate the relationships with other children's services agencies.
- Collaboration needs to proceed from a common philosophy among the participants and depends on collegiality.
- Teachers and other "line workers" must be involved at the outset.

Parents attending the Forum voiced their concern that all but one of them were parents of children receiving special education services. They felt that it was important to hear from other parents, particularly those who have extensive contact with juvenile court and children's protective services, as well as those without health insurance.

Collaboration needs to proceed from a common philosophy among the participants and depends on collegiality.

As the Forum came to a close, Kirst noted that participants left with a number of potential solutions and important contacts with potential partners. There was a great deal of optimism. They had some answers and, if not specific plans, then the knowledge to further develop a course of action. There were, of course, still some uncertainties about issues such as serving the needs of the family as a whole and about where to set priorities when the budget is limited.

In his recommendations for the next conference, Kirst stressed the need for more representation from health, social welfare, and juvenile court agencies.

The Forum served as an important vehicle for discussing the problems of collaboration and for learning about and sharing firsthand accounts of how collaboration can and does work. These illustrations proved to be "significant beachheads on a large midwestern terrain." The issue now is that we "need to get the troops moving inland."

Where Do We Go From Here?

The NCREL Early Childhood Connection was the first of three such forums to be sponsored by the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory. We have made a commitment to sponsor another in the fall of 1992 and a third in 1993. The focus of each of the next two forums will remain the same: to identify, develop, and promote linkages in the community that foster healthy development of young children, birth through age eight, and their families.

The Forum to be held October 19 & 20, 1992 will *feature promising and exemplary practices in interagency collaboration at the community level.* If you have a promising practice that you would like to share with others, we encourage you to complete and return the enclosed Call for Presentations.

We are particularly looking for collaborative efforts that ease the transition from preschool to early elementary school and community collaboratives that have created or enhanced comprehensive, integrated, family-focused, and community-based services to meet the educational, health, and social needs of young children and their families.

In an effort to continue our "connnections," NCREL has begun a new publication, ***The Early Childhood Connection.*** In this bulletin we alert the early childhood community to what is happening in various areas of the field. We include information on new publications and resources, conference announcements, legislative information for our seven-state region, and recent happenings at the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory. The first issue has been very well received, and we are looking forward to publishing our second issue in the summer of 1992. We encourage our readers to submit information for the bulletin so that we all can keep abreast of happenings throughout the region and the country.

We are also pursuing our Early Childhood Connection via electronic network. Conference participants who expressed interest and who have the necessary equipment have been brought "on line."

We are seeing more and more agencies across the country working together to provide better services for children and families. The Early Childhood and Family Education Program at the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory is pleased to know that we have facilitated, inspired, and contributed to many collaborations currently under way.

We appreciate all of the time and effort our participants devoted to this unique Forum. It was truly a wonderful experience working with so many devoted individuals across our region. It was an inspiration to see what can happen when people work together in hopes of making a difference in the lives of children and families. It indeed takes a whole village to educate a child, and we thank you for becoming part of our special community.

NCREL Early Childhood and Family Education

Advisory Council 1991-1992

The North Central Regional Educational Laboratory is honored to have the following people on its Early Childhood and Family Education Advisory Council. These members meet annually and advise the Early Childhood and Family Education Program on issues that need to be addressed by the Laboratory. The focus of this Forum was based upon their recommendations and sugggestions. They are instrumental to the success of the Program.

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